

Conference Abstract

If Only They Could Speak

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Abstract

As a child, I loved exhibits at the museum. As an adult conservation biologist, entering the back rooms of the museum to view the collections is even more remarkable. I have begun to realise the scope of what might be held in museum collections, and to consider what these specimens, artefacts, taonga (treasure) might tell us. Using examples from my work on insects, birds and kahukurii (dogskin cloaks), and analyses from morphometrics to isotopes, I will show how sampling from museum collections can add layers of richness and complexity to research, with the added dimensions of space, time, and connection to communities. Finally, I'll discuss some of the ethics and understandings that guide my work with museum collections, and what it means to be part of collaborative partnerships of discovery with museum curators and communities.

Keywords

conservation biology, museum collections, research, community, sampling, ethics

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